

**STAFF MEETING MINUTES
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING
ROOM 113
TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2001
9 A.M.**

Commissioners Present: Kathy Campbell, Chair
Bob Workman, Vice Chair
Larry Hudkins
Linda Steinman
Bernie Heier

Others Present: Kerry Eagan, Chief Administrative Officer
Don Thomas, County Engineer
Larry Worrell, County Surveyor
Dan Ludwig, Lincoln-Lancaster County Ecological
Advisory Committee
Bruce Medcalf, County Clerk
Gwen Thorpe, Deputy County Clerk
Ann Taylor, County Clerk's Office

AGENDA ITEM

A handout was disseminated detailing the purpose and format for the discussion (Exhibit A).

- 1 RURAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ISSUES** - Kathleen Sellman, Planning Director; Kent Morgan, Assistant Planning Director; Mike DeKalb and Duncan Ross, Planning Department

Kent Morgan, Assistant Planning Director, reviewed *Major Work Task Schedule for Comprehensive Plan Process: 2001+*.

Mike DeKalb, Planning Department, gave an overview of the following (See Exhibit B):

- Lincoln/Lancaster County 2025 Comprehensive Plan - County Development*
- Lincoln/Lancaster County 2025 Comprehensive Plan - Growth Direction*
- Lincoln/Lancaster County 2025 Comprehensive Plan - Transportation*
- Lincoln/Lancaster County 2025 Comprehensive Plan - Urban Development*

DeKalb also reviewed *Key Town Issues - April 2001*, noting the Planning Department has held multiple meetings throughout the County and in Lancaster County's incorporated communities in effort to solicit input on planning issues.

Discussion took place on the following issues:

Farming

Campbell said she believes the County will continue to see a transition between traditional row crop agriculture and urbanization. She noted that certain portions of the County are devoted to farming and said she would like those farmers to be able to continue that as long as they want.

Steinman reported that she has observed how the "right to farm" coexists with urbanization in Massachusetts.

Workman said he believes the "right to farm" needs to be preserved, even in the urban setting.

Heier said if the government isn't going to stay in the farming business "then farming will no longer exist as we now know it today". He said he supports the "right to farm" but said "fifty years from now I do not think you'll see the type of farming we have now in Lancaster County". Heier said he anticipates that there will be increased pressure for acreage development on the outer limits of Lancaster County. He also expressed concern about large cattle and hog confinement operations and said "if you're going to allow confinements, you'd better decide now where they're going to be".

Hudkins said he believes the "right to farm" will continue to disintegrate. He said "its not economically viable to farm in Lancaster County anymore" and said many farmers must augment their farming operations with outside employment. Hudkins stated that he believes the County's "20 acre rule" (sets the minimum lot size at 20 acres in the Agriculture (AG) zoning district) is a waste of land and that the County Board needs to allow businesses in agricultural areas.

Campbell said it is easier for a city to grow into large areas that are not populated by acreages. She said "greenbelting" (valuing property as to its use, not on the price it would bring on the open market) helps farms to continue their existence and suggested that consideration be given to "allowing the greenbelt to stand if you annex the land". Campbell said this won't help large farming operations, but may help the small, niche farms.

Steinman agreed that it will be difficult to sustain the large, row crop farms, but said it is possible to encourage and sustain smaller farms and niche farms.

DeKalb noted that Lancaster County has more farms than any county in the state and said over half of its farmers derive more than half of their income from non-farm operations.

Heier said it's very difficult to find and develop a niche in the market and said he does not look for niche businesses to be agriculture related. He added that most farmers are able to make more money selling their land than from farming it.

Acreages

DeKalb noted that approximately 6 percent of the County's population resides on acreages.

Hudkins said 3-3.5 acres is all that is really needed for an acreage and said if the "20 acre rule" is maintained, then a master plan for infrastructure is needed to prepare for further subdivision in the future. He said he likes the acreage grid placement system, which provides a master plan for future infrastructure, and clustered development for that reason.

Heier suggested that the County Board give clustered developments a bonus, allowing them to increase their density if the development agrees to pay for paving.

In response to a question from Heier, DeKalb said most developers do not require "building envelopes" (conditional location of a dwelling within a parcel), as they don't want to restrict the buyers.

Heier said he believes "building envelopes" should be looked at to see how to best meet the needs of the City in terms of sewer and water.

Workman said he has given a great deal of thought to the "20 acre rule" and referred to a letter from Don Thomas, County Engineer, (see agenda packet) that suggests giving consideration to a larger minimum lot size, such as 40 acres, that also allows for more than two home sites.

Steinman asked "Why have one size fits all?"

Campbell said "it's not the lot size, it's the density." She said the County needs to move to more refined zoning classifications and said the Stevens Creek Basin Initiative Task Force has called for this. Campbell added that the Geographic Information System (GIS) will serve as an important tool in identifying areas suitable for acreage development.

DeKalb asked what criteria would help to identify those areas.

Hudkins said infrastructure and area attractions are key.

Heier expressed concern that Lancaster County is losing tax dollars to adjoining counties because of zoning restrictions.

Eagan commented that many individuals located across the county line work in Lancaster County and utilize our roads. He said a large portion of the county is under Lincoln's zoning jurisdiction and said inter-jurisdictional relationships are crucial.

Workman said he believes development should be located along paved roads.

Steinman said contiguous development may not work all the time and said she does not believe zoning is too restrictive, rather it allows for planned development.

Campbell said criteria should include roads, water, sewer, and law enforcement. She said the County Board also needs to consider how acreage development fits with the villages.

In response to a question from Workman, Campbell said she does not believe the "20 acre rule" works from border to border any longer. She also stated that the County Board has sent a very clear message to the development community that it is very open to "clusters", but is not willing to just change and go to Agriculture Residential (AGR).

Commercial/Industrial in the County

DeKalb noted that the current policy is to direct these businesses to the towns.

Campbell said the County currently lacks the infrastructure that big businesses need and suggested working in tandem with the City to develop spots that would work for the future.

Steinman added that consideration needs to be given to the "big picture" to prepare for future urbanization.

Workman said the County needs to allow for small businesses that evolve from acreages.

Hudkins concurred, noting a number of small businesses currently exist out in the county and said "It's going to be increasingly important that those agricultural operations that are out there have the ability to conduct some business, some form of commercial ventures, along with just straight agricultural farming."

Workman suggested that a special permit process be utilized.

Campbell said "You can't just allow any business to go anywhere they want to in the County." She added that the County Board needs to seek input from the villages as it develops criteria for allowing businesses in the county.

Cities and Villages and Other Jurisdictions

Workman said he believes it is good policy to develop around the villages.

Eagan asked whether the issue of a multi-jurisdictional approach to planned growth and planned development between jurisdictions should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan

Hudkins remarked that there needs to be uniform enforcement of zoning regulations within the City's three mile zoning jurisdiction and the County.

Other Issues

Campbell suggested holding a Regional Council on Planning, in which the villages and surrounding counties would be invited to share information about planning issues.

Hudkins asked for an update on the rural addressing project.

Larry Worrell, County Surveyor, said addresses are being updated and the project is anticipated to be completed in 12-14 weeks.

Eagan noted that signage will be a budget consideration.

In response to a question from Campbell, Kathleen Sellman, Planning Director, said the issues that haven't been raised to the degree that she anticipated are community separators and changes in agriculture to a more boutique or niche agricultural operation that can exist on a smaller parcel of land.

In response to a request from Heier, DeKalb agreed to prepare a comprehensive report on Omaha and Douglas County.

DeKalb suggested that consideration also be given to entertainment centers and parks.

Campbell mentioned the park trust concept.

The Board requested additional briefings on what the City is thinking of in terms of infrastructure (water, sewer and electrical power).

Sellman said that with the Geographic Information System (GIS) information that is now available "we're much more able to pinpoint what areas are sensitive, what areas are more defined for development and we can distribute those in a way that makes some sense." She added that as a philosophy about the future is developed through this process, GIS information will be applied "in a way that gives us a more sophisticated, more sensitive to local conditions type of scheme that will help us to accomplish those future visions."

By direction of the Chair, the meeting was adjourned.

Bruce Medcalf
Lancaster County Clerk

NOTE: See Exhibit C for the Planning Department's list of the issues identified in the discussion.